

Mike Trigg leads the STMA team

Mike Trigg, CSFM, is Superintendent of Parks with the Waukegan (IL) Park District, and the new president of the Sports Turf Managers Association. He is a Certified Sports Field Manager through STMA and a Park and Recreation Professional through the Illinois Park & Recreation Association. Trigg has a Bachelor of Science, Urban Forestry, from Michigan Technological University, and is a graduate of the Park & Recreation Maintenance Management School conducted by North Carolina State University, co-sponsoring NRPA.

As superintendent, Trigg's responsibilities include administration of the Parks Department with maintenance of all grounds and properties of the District's 46 neighborhood and community park sites, as well as athletic field maintenance of Park District and School District ball diamonds and soccer fields.

Trigg's first exposure to turf came in high school when he worked summers at the golf course of a private country club near his home in northern Kentucky, just across the Ohio river from Cincinnati.

While attending college in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, he fell in love with the upper Michigan area known as the "Copper Country" so much that he stayed there year-round and worked summers with a landscape company in Houghton, MI, doing landscape installation and maintenance, school athletic field renovations, and irrigation installations.

After graduating in December 1979, he landed a job with a firm in the Chicago area responsible for Marriott Hotel landscape maintenance. After six months he joined Marriott as a maintenance supervisor on the hotel grounds and golf course of the Marriott Lincolnshire Resort, Lincolnshire, IL. He was there 6 years before accepting a parks supervisor position in Waukegan in 1986. His first year of field maintenance included Grosche Field's hosting the CABA national tournament.

In December 2005, Trigg and his wife Paula will celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary with their sons, Christopher, 18, and Patrick, 15. Trigg says his sons are pursuing interests in arts and music rather than turf. Chris says playing cello "pays better than mowing grass" he relates.



"YOUR SPORTS TURF MANAGEMENT PRACTICES SHOULD BE THE SAME FOR ALL YOUR DIAMONDS, NOT JUST ONE OR TWO PREMIER FIELDS," THE LATE HARRY GILL TOLD TRIGG.

Meeting the late STMA founding father, Harry Gill, in 1990, made a big impact. "I had the privilege of having Harry come down to Waukegan for the STMA Midwest Chapter's first sports turf workshop. What a thrill. Harry gave a short talk on 'Being a Professional in the 1990s' and demonstrated pitching mound preparation and maintenance," Trigg says. "I remember in talking with Harry how interested he was when I talked of my responsibilities of athletic field maintenance at the Park District. Harry was very complimentary of Grosche Field and its condition. In our conversation, he asked me how many other ball diamonds do we maintain, and do they all look as good as Grosche Field.

"I replied that no, we had more than 30 fields but Grosche was our premier field. Harry's reply was, 'I challenge you to maintain all your diamonds like this, because all teams, whether youth or adult, deserve to play on field conditions just like Grosche. Your sports turf management practices should be the same for all your diamonds, not just one or two premier fields,'" Trigg recalls.

Later that summer Trigg and Waukegan PD's executive director, Greg Petry, visited Gill at Milwaukee County Stadium and were invited to join the crew in pre-game activities.

Trigg says he was also influenced by opportunities to personally meet other key leaders in STMA, including Dr. William Daniels, Dick Ericson, and George Toma, during educational programs. "That's exactly why STMA was formed, because these guys all believed that sports turf could be improved through the sharing of knowledge and exchange of ideas," says Trigg.

"I also consider Greg Petry as a true mentor not only in sports turf, but also parks and recreation. I attribute my success as a supervisor and now superintendent



through his guidance and mentorship," he says. "He has allowed me opportunities to pursue my interest in STMA.

"There are so many other professional and commercial members of STMA who have over the years shared their knowledge and expertise with me. The networking that takes place within this association is to me its greatest asset," Trigg says.

Strong vision leads to strong future

"I'm excited about the hiring of Kim Heck as our new Chief Executive Officer," Trigg says. "When the Board conducted interviews with the top candidates, I was most impressed with Kim's comments when asked about priorities. She commented on three items: to hear from the Board and conduct frank discussions about STMA's future, success and failures; to make the change from a management firm a smooth transition as the day-to-day business of the organization continues; and to spend time with members because with change comes uncertainty, so listen and communicate to chapters and industry partners that

great things are going to happen.

"I must continue to remind myself that it has been only five months for Kim as our CEO and yet in this short period, she has displayed her passion on association management."

Trigg says Heck and the Board have determined that in 2005 their focus will be to reestablish a strong committee system and a membership drive. "We not only want to retain current members, but seek new members in all categories and share with them the benefits the association can offer to help them develop into the best professionals they can be," says Trigg. "In addition, we want to create relationships and reach out to other associations (see page XX for an example).

"In the five years I've been on the Board we have undertaken great initiatives. It is important that we refocus the Board's responsibility to be the visionary body of the association, thinking strategically about issues facing the industry and membership, and provide direction and leadership for the association to achieve its mission," adds Trigg. "I will continue to work closely with Kim Heck to evaluate how all aspects of the association can be more efficient and effective to the membership and external audiences.

"Kim spoke at our Fall Board Meeting about how the association's growth and vitality can be measured by a good educational and certification program. This will be our charge as we move toward STMA's 25th anniversary in 2006."

Athletic field maintenance is only one aspect of Trigg's responsibilities as superintendent. With a full-time staff of 21 and an average of 25 seasonal staff throughout the summer, he is very busy year-round with all aspects of park and facilities maintenance in 46 park sites.

"I have a terrific staff who share with me the passion to want to make the Waukegan parks the best they can be. I am greatly assisted by Scott MacLean, manager of park maintenance and Bill Walker, manager of construction & building maintenance.

"Our operations are broken down into maintenance crews: Athletic Fields, Park Mowing, Park Cleanup, Playgrounds, Horticulture, Custodial, Parks Construction and Improvements, and Building Maintenance. Many of the full-time staff act as crew leaders with seasonal staff assigned to these specific crews," Trigg says. "In addition, I oversee the Parks & Planning Division, assisted by Steve Wikner, landscape architect, Mike Pavelich, graphics specialist, and Nancy Vaseloff, our secretary. Together we implement park site developments and design, capital improvement projects, paving and lighting improvements, grants, and the park use permit program that administers over 280 park permits annually."

"I am very excited about our plans to develop a community sports complex. The Park District approached Johns Manville Corporation to express an interest in purchasing 100 acres of the inactive Johns Manville property in Waukegan to build a sports complex. The challenge the District faces is that the community desires expansion of services as it grows and develops, and this site is large enough to accommodate a much needed expansion of sports activities and programs," says Trigg.

"We selected this site after extensive search of open space through the Waukegan community and surrounding area. Most importantly this will be a trans-



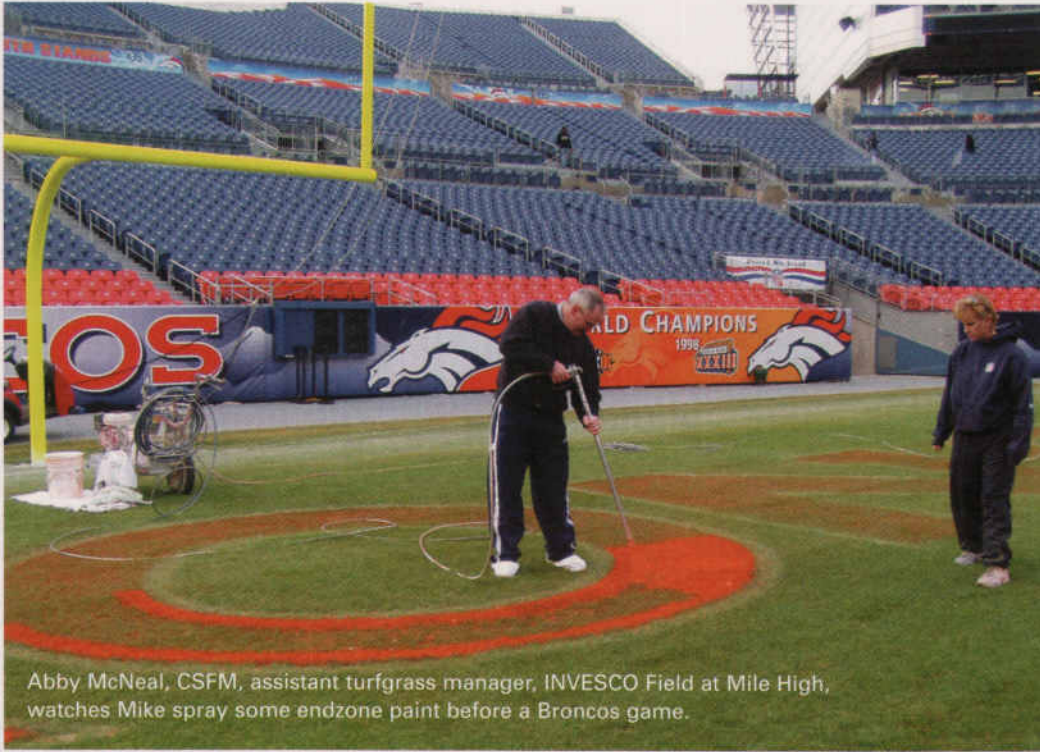
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Abby McNeal, CSFM, assistant turfgrass manager, INVESCO Field at Mile High, watches Mike spray some endzone paint before a Broncos game.

formation from a Brownfield to a Greenfield site. Our complex conceptual design includes one full-size, multi-use stadium field with seating up to 5,000, 14 full-size soccer fields, eight youth-size fields, five baseball/softball fields with full fencing, bleachers and batting cage, and five asphalt basketball courts," says Trigg. "Amenities will include 1,500 paved parking spaces, with 500 overflow spaces, three buildings for small concessionaires to serve on-site patrons, two picnic groves that may include small playgrounds, and restroom facilities conveniently located throughout the site.

"At the Waukegan Park District we believe that proper playing conditions and maintenance of fields is extremely important and are obligated to provide the best and safest fields. We identified the importance of Attention to Details in all of our field maintenance operations. The importance of detail in either our daily field preps, routine field maintenance, such as field painting, turf cultural practices or fall field renovation projects," says Trigg.

Full-time park maintenance worker Tony Diaz, under the supervision of Scott MacLean, is responsible for all District athletic field maintenance operations. As summer seasonal staff is hired, Tony's emphasis is placed on proper training so the employee understands what is expected when preparing a ball diamond.

Tony and his seasonal staff prepare for more than 2,300 sporting field events running from April through November. In soccer alone, the fields played more than 1,300 soccer activities on 14 fields and could easily double that amount if more soccer fields were available for play, says Trigg. "Use of Grosche Fiield is in high demand, not only for local games but also weekend rentals for Chicago's Men's Senior baseball and White Sox baseball youth clinics."

"As superintendent, my goals have been to develop a positive departmental image through service, responsiveness, and consistency in daily assignments," says Trigg. "In addition, promote a positive safety attitude and create an atmosphere that stresses the importance of quality and encourages cooperative teamwork.

"I also have hanging in my office a framed quotation from one of my first ever sports turf programs. It was from a presentation given by Dr. Richard Caton. It states 'Prior Planning and Prudent Preparation Prevent Poor Performance.' I can't tell you how true this is for me with our park maintenance operations. Whether scheduling daily maintenance tasks or long-range capital improvement projects, the prior planning and preparation makes for efficient performance," Trigg adds.

Career advancement

"I read an article in another periodical that stated the importance of keeping on top of the latest issues and trends in your profession, and gather and share solutions to day-to-day challenges with other colleagues. In addition, seek out resources to improve your performance and make important networking contacts by renewing membership in professional associations. This definitely sounds like great advice for any sports turf manager," Trigg says.

"I truly believe STMA has a lot to offer for anyone either new in the industry, or with years of experience, to develop into the best professional they can be.

"For me the benefits of STMA membership began hitting home with the establishment of the Midwest Chapter in 1990. I took an active role as workshop chairman organizing several sports turf workshops in the early 90s. As I mentioned earlier, the thrill in having Harry Gill as a speaker. In addition, the first ever sports turf workshops at the Chicago Bears Training Center with sports turf manager Ken Mrock, and in 1992 at Wrigley Field with Frank Capparelli and grounds manager Roger O'Connor. I also organized the Chapter's First Annual Meeting and Luncheon in March 1991 asking Steve Wightman, at Jack Murphy Stadium, to come to be our guest speaker. Also, it was exciting having as our Keynote Speaker Chicago Bear quarterback Jim Harbaugh.

"In 1992 and 1993, I was assisted by many in the Midwest Chapter as we organized and conducted the National Midwest Sports Turf Institutes at Wheaton College. The institutes were daylong events including educational sessions, mini trade shows, and keynote speakers. We drew from National STMA Board speakers, such as Gil Landry and Henry Indyk," Trigg says.

"I attained my STMA certification in 2001. CSFM certification brings greater credibility to our profession. It recognizes the education and training standards necessary to provide high quality park and recreation sports field facilities. Attaining certification signifies to my peers that I have made a commitment to excellence. I am proud of my profession and accomplishments as a

Certified Sports Field Manager," says Trigg.

"I believe my involvement with STMA has contributed to my personal and professional growth. I urge everyone connected with this industry to get actively involved, to volunteer your time and talents to STMA or a chapter. I know for me the more I give, the more I get back." **ST**

—Edited by Eric Schroder

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